THE MANSFIELDIAN magazine
SPRING 2023

# Mountie Spirit

## Reinert Makes a Triumphant Return to Play After Stroke

PAGE 10

## PROFESSIONAL U:
## The Human Endowment of Commonwealth University

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Greetings Mansfield Family,

It brings me great joy to write this letter for the return of *The Mansfieldian*. The return of a university magazine at Mansfield is one example of what's possible through the power of integration. Commonwealth University began as a bold dream designed to bring new opportunities for students across Pennsylvania, to harness the strengths of three powerhouse institutions, and to ensure that affordable high-quality education options remain available in rural communities. The integration of Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield also has allowed for benefits beyond the classroom by leveraging our combined resources to create initiatives that positively impact a range of stakeholders.

We are quickly approaching the one-year anniversary of Commonwealth University. I'm proud of all we have accomplished together, and I am inspired by the work ahead of us. Our future students will have access to a fully updated curriculum and pathbreaking coursework, leading to degrees that are increasingly relevant in today's economy. Commonwealth University students will enter the workforce ready to make an immediate difference and positive impact for their employers.

Within these pages, you'll read about Professional U— our comprehensive approach to career and student professional engagement coupled with an engaged community of dedicated faculty, staff, alumni, and employers. It begins on the first day a student sets foot on campus. Our goal is for each student to complete one professional experience, such as an internship, each year. These high-impact professional experiences give students an advantage when they prepare for their first jobs. About 70% of our interns are offered employment at the company where they interned, and 80% accept these job offers.

As Mansfield alumni and supporters, you can partner with us to provide these crucial experiences for current Mounties. From establishing high-impact internships, to supporting Professional Experience Grants that make it possible for students without the financial means to complete internships, or returning to campus to conduct mock interviews or resume reviews with students. Your support makes a difference in the life of our students.

Our cover story features the remarkable story of Madison Reinert—a student athlete who overcame astounding odds after suffering a stroke. Madison's story is one of hope, resilience, and more than anything, the strength of the Mountie Spirit.

In May, we celebrated our graduates at the 2023 Commencement Ceremony. As President, one of my favorite moments is shaking hands with our graduates as they receive their diplomas. Commencement marks a significant achievement in our students' experiences, but more than that it signifies the beginning of the next phase of their lives when possibilities are limitless.

As we look ahead, the possibilities for Mansfield to continue to thrive in the Northern Tier and serve as a place of transformation in the lives of our students are also limitless. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do in support of our students. As you'll see in these pages, the Mountie Spirit is indefatigable. I hope you will join us on campus in the coming months for Homecoming, to cheer on our student-athletes, or to take in a musical performance this fall season.

Sincerely,

**Bashar W. Hanna**
*President*

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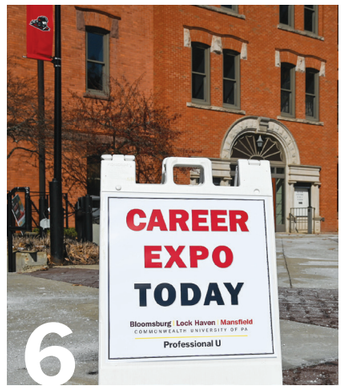
# THE MANSFIELD*IAN* *magazine*



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## Commonwealth Earns PNGAS 'Guard Friendly School' Designation

Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield, as Commonwealth University, have been named as "PNGAS Guard-Friendly School" by the Pennsylvania National Guard Associations (PNGAS).

Developed by the PNGAS Education Advisory Council, the "PNGAS Guard-Friendly School" program was designed to recognize high schools, colleges, universities, and trade schools that meet or exceed a set of standards for creating a supportive learning environment that is friendly to recruiting and assists members of the Pennsylvania Guard in pursuing post-secondary degrees and military service.

These criteria include providing flexible scheduling options for National Guard members whose class availability may be disrupted due to the requirements of their Guard service, providing credit for prior learning via military training and experience in accordance with American Council on Education (ACE) college credit recommendations, and offering training for school faculty and/or staff on how to support the specific needs of military and veteran students, and permits recruiting by the Pennsylvania National Guard.

*State Treasurer Stacy Garrity, Dr. Bashar W. Hanna, president*

## Bashar W. Hanna Appointed to PA Tuition Account Program Advisory Board

Dr. Bashar W. Hanna, president, has been appointed to serve on Pennsylvania's Tuition Account Program (TAP) Advisory Board by former Gov. Tom Wolf. Hanna's appointment runs through September 2026.

The board advises on the work of the Pennsylvania 529 College Savings Program, which provides families with a tax-advantaged way to help save for their children's higher education.

State Treasurer Stacy Garrity, a 1986 graduate of Bloomsburg University, oversees the PA 529 program.

PA 529 accounts are designed to help Pennsylvania families steadily and strategically save for future educational expenses. The PA 529 Guaranteed Savings Plan allows families to save at today's tuition rates to meet tomorrow's tuition costs.

More than 276,000 PA 529 accounts are open, with over $6 billion saved for future education. Over the program's more than 30 years, it has helped families pay for more than $5 billion in qualified higher education expenses.

## Mansfield Student and Alumni Concert Choirs Perform at Carnegie Hall

Fifty-three students in the Mansfield University Concert Choir, along with 55 Concert Choir alumni, performed at the renowned Carnegie Hall in New York City on Jan. 15 in celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King.

The Mansfield students and alumni performed alongside five high school choirs, four of which are directed by MU alumni.

The varied program of choral music featured the works of composer Stacey Gibbs with six of his spiritual arrangements. Gibbs attended the performances and served as the master of ceremonies.

The finale, "Way Over in Beulah Land," also the title of the concert, is the third event that Dr. Peggy Dettwiler, director of choral activities, has organized in Carnegie Hall.

During the concert, longtime supporters of the Mansfield vocal program, Howard and Olynda (Chaffee) Smith, were posthumously honored with the 2023 Del Kieffner Award. This award of national recognition is presented annually to a music educator who has gone above and beyond in their mentoring of young students in the performing arts.

The high school choirs that performed with Mansfield students and alumni included Port Allegany High School (Cole Ramsey, director), Troy High School (Sydney Ramsey, director), Boyertown High School ( Jeff Brunner, director), Dover High School (Samantha Roberts, director), and Waynesboro High School (Andrew Wensel, director).

The performance included more than 300 participants across the seven choirs. A sold-out bus of supporters traveled from Mansfield to Carnegie Hall to witness the concert.

## President Hanna Named to Higher Education Power 100

President Bashar W. Hanna recently was named to the 2023 Higher Education Power 100 list by City & State Pennsylvania.

After a multi-year consolidation process, Hanna took over leadership of Commonwealth University on July 1, 2022. With University finances stabilized, Hanna is launching a new strategic plan and touting the merger's opportunities for everyone from varsity athletes to local community college students. View the full list at **cityandstatepa.com**.

## Commonwealth University Receives $60K Hunger-Free Campus Grant

In an effort to address student hunger on campus, Commonwealth University (CU) received the Pennsylvania Hunger-Free Campus+ designation from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This designation also qualified CU to apply for grant opportunities, resulting in a $60K grant awarded to the University to address food insecurity on its campuses at Mansfield, Lock Haven, and Bloomsburg. This was the highest amount given to five of the 28 colleges and universities that received the grant in the 2022-23 academic year.

Former Gov. Tom Wolf successfully advocated for $1 million to support postsecondary institutions' efforts to address student hunger needs on campus. This effort resulted in the institutions being invited to apply for the PA Hunger-Free Campus or Campus+ designation to demonstrate their commitment to addressing the hunger needs and food insecurity for college students and diminishing hunger as a barrier to learning.

Dr. Tiffany Welch, associate professor of social work at Mansfield, wrote the grant and Dr. Amy Downes, associate vice president for student success and campus life at Lock Haven and director of the Haven Cupboard food pantry, assisted her efforts.

The grant will help the three campuses with their objectives of expanding pantry services with food purchases and refrigeration and upgrades to their existing facilities. They also plan to create a more standard system for food delivery across all campuses and supply sharing.

In addition, Welch and Downes hope to strengthen oversight by establishing a Basic Needs Task Force comprised of individuals from all three campuses; explore community partnerships and alliances; become a COMPASS partner and connect learners to eligible services; and increase and improve communication of their services to CU students.

They also hope to partner with the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University's #Real College Survey—an initiative to help ensure students can meet basic needs at colleges and institutions around the country.

## Commonwealth University Honored with Three 'CUPPIE' Awards

*Caption. From left, Tom McGuire, Nikki Keller, Stephen Filipiak.*

The Marketing and Communications Department (MarComm) at Commonwealth University (CU) took home three awards at the recent 2023 CUPPIE Awards competition sponsored by CUPRAP (College and University Public Relations and Associated Professionals).

Commonwealth U received one bronze and two gold CUPPIES. A gold was awarded in the Long Form Story Writing category for the piece, "Pulling Back the Curtain on the Uncommon Man," written by Thomas McGuire, senior director of strategic communications, for the *Bloomsburg: The University Magazine* winter 2022 issue. The second gold was awarded in the Wild Card category to the MarComm staff for their collective effort for community scholars and scholarship strategy (scholarship materials, media relations, social media, and webpage) and the bronze was awarded in the Executive Communications Speech Writing/Remarks category for the "Clinton County Economic Partnership Keynote," written by Elizabeth Arnold, executive communications and editorial director, and Dan Knorr, director of external and government relations.

CUPPIE Awards are given for creative excellence in marketing and communications to the work of member institutions in the categories of advertising, electronic media, print, public relations and marketing, writing, and photography.

## Commonwealth University Hosts Inaugural Presidential Leadership Summit

Commonwealth University recently hosted the inaugural Presidential Leadership Summit at the Pennsylvania Capitol in Harrisburg on Tuesday, April 25. The event, sponsored by PSECU, brought together student leaders, legislative allies, and alumni from Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield.

Commonwealth University President, Bashar Hanna, spoke about the transformative power of education and the need for the university, alumni, and supporters to partner together to create opportunities for students to participate in professional experiences that prepare them for today's workforce.

According to Hanna, Commonwealth University strives to provide at least one professional experience, such as an internship, for each student every year. "Students who participate in an internship have a 70 percent chance of being employed immediately upon graduation, compared to 36 percent for those who do not participate in an internship," Hanna said.

The Chair of Commonwealth U's Council of Trustees, John Wetzel, spoke about the power of three and the importance of placing student success at the forefront of the university's mission. He also thanked the student trustees from Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield for attending the event and supporting their fellow students.

Adam Stewart, PSECU's vice president of strategic growth, marketing, and relationship management, cited the strength of the partnership between PSECU and Commonwealth U. He touted the importance of providing affordable, high-quality academic options for Pennsylvania students and spoke about PSECU's role in offering financial literacy training to students at all Commonwealth U locations.

As Commonwealth University approaches the milestone of its first anniversary on July 1, student success remains the focal point of the institution's mission. Through partnerships with local and regional employers and alumni, the university will continue to serve as an economic engine for local communities and the commonwealth.

PROFESSIONAL*u*

# PROFESSIONAL U:

## The Human Endowment of Commonwealth University

A new and innovative approach within Alumni and Professional Engagement — is a career community of alumni, faculty, staff, and employers who support student success through transformative partnerships that increase graduates' probability for rapid, high-return professional opportunities upon earning their degrees.

*Nichole Lefelhoc*

"Professional U is the human endowment of our university," says Dr. Lynda Michaels, Associate Vice President for Alumni and Professional Engagement. "It's a promise we've made to students that from the time we recruit you to graduation and beyond, we are committed to you and your professional goals."

Michaels describes the program as a promise the University makes to students. "Professional U is about the network, and once you're in it, it's never going to leave you," she adds. "Through integration and 'The Power of Three,' the alumni network available to students grows exponentially."

Nichole Lefelhoc leads Career and Professional Development at Mansfield. She's encouraged and excited by the numerous possibilities that have arisen for students through integration.

"We used to be a one-person office at Mansfield, but now we have the support of an entire team behind us. Plus, our campus presence has doubled and will continue to grow," she says.

Under the leadership of the Advancement Division, Career and Professional Development has transitioned to a career liaison model with six career coaches across Commonwealth U's campuses—all with direct relationships to the university's five colleges. According to Lefelhoc, "We're able to better support students by tapping into industry knowledge and infusing alumni and employers into all of our programming."

Each campus is also home to a full-time director and assistant director of Career and Professional Development. This approach ensures a unique, targeted, and specialized approach to programming and relationship building.

What excites Lefelhoc most about the growth in the department is the focus it places on students. "Everything we do centers around building relationships and creating social capital for students. Many of our students are first-generation and come from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. We're able to act as the builders and connectors—giving them exposure to building a professional network and supporting them through the entire process," she says.

This comprehensive approach to student, alumni, and employer engagement aims to build a network of strong, engaged partnerships that will benefit all stakeholders long into the future. Lefelhoc describes it as: creating intentional opportunities. "The whole idea is to build connections to benefit students. We're engaging alumni and employer partners while simultaneously designing opportunities for students to connect, learn, and get exposure in the fields they plan to enter. In many cases, they're learning about things they never knew existed," she says.

> "We're able to better support students by tapping into industry knowledge and infusing alumni and employers into all of our programming."
>
> – NICHOLE LEFELHOC

Jim Crowley serves as assistant director of Career and Professional Development and is based at Mansfield. With a professional background in creative and performing arts, his liaison-ship with the College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities makes sense. "Jim brings a wealth of knowledge to this role, which aligns strongly with Mansfield's strong programs in music," Lefelhoc says. "I'm really energized and excited about the team we have; integration really has expanded what we're able to do for students. It proves that we are better together. We have different experiences and expertise; coming together allows us to home in on those."

Mansfield University recently welcomed David Donlick '87 as director of alumni and employer engagement, also working within the advancement division as a member of the team in alumni and professional engagement, with a specific focus on alumni volunteer engagement while supporting locally-based employer initiatives at Mansfield.

Michaels shares, "With Professional U, we've taken alumni engagement and employer engagement and blended them to facilitate newer, better, more efficient pathways to student partnerships, along with philanthropic opportunities for alumni and businesses interested in getting even more involved.

"As a result, we're seeing relationships blossom and we're finding more meaningful ways to engage stakeholders that support their passion, impact students' professional growth, and directly align with the university's mission to provide an affordable, experiential, world-class education for our students," she says.

Michaels also notes that volunteer board members from the Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield Alumni Associations will play pivotal roles in expanding alumni networks to support student partnerships as Professional U evolves to meet everchanging student and employer needs.

The MU Alumni Association has strong leadership in President Brendan Cregan '89, who is poised to lead Mansfield alumni into this exciting next chapter. "The future of Mansfield University has no limits due to the endless opportunities afforded to students in combination with Bloomsburg and Lock Haven," says Cregan. "I couldn't be more excited for the variety of opportunities for alumni to get involved and give back, something many have wanted for so many years. In coordination with our director of alumni and employer engagement, we are reaching out across the university and community developing programs to help prepare students for college life, and their future careers. It's a great time to be a Mountaineer!"

If you would like to learn more about Alumni and Professional Engagement, Career Development, Professional U, or how you or your company can facilitate impactful alumni-student partnerships at Mansfield University, contact Nichole Lefelhoc at **nlefelhoc@commonwealthu.edu or 570-662-4914.**

*Alumni Volunteer Interest Form*

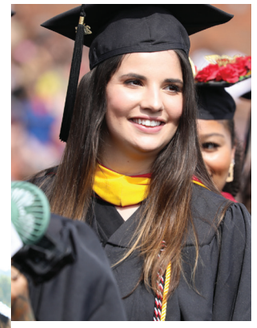
# *Spring* Commencement 2023

On a bright spring morning, Commonwealth University-Mansfield held its 154th Spring Commencement Ceremony. On Friday, May 12, at Karl Van Norman Field, more than 200 students entered the ranks of the Mountie alumni family.

President Bashar Hanna encouraged the graduates to use their education to make a difference in the world. "As Mansfield students you were surrounded by a community of people who believed in you. Your friends and families who are here to celebrate you, your professors who challenged you to think critically and creatively. Your classmates who supported you through the ups and downs of college life. And your friends who helped create memories that will last a lifetime."

He continued, "As you leave us today, remember that success, measured only by academic achievements and career accomplishments, is empty and superficial without strength of character. The world needs you. You are the future. Each of you has the potential to be extraordinary in your own way. So go be extraordinary."

Chair of the Commonwealth University Council of Trustees John Wetzel shared that, "You, our students, remain the focus of our University's mission and your success defines us. Despite all of the challenges placed in front of you, each of you persisted—and all of you have succeeded."



# Mountie Spirit

## REINERT MAKES A TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO PLAY AFTER A STROKE

BY: **OWEN LUKENS**

Adversity for student-athletes comes in many forms, from battling through injury, to competing in a hostile environment, to dealing with season struggles, or even a global pandemic. The ability to overcome and even adapt to major adversity defines a student-athlete's ultimate success.

But what if you deal with life-altering adversity? How you respond to that defines the type of person you will become.

Mansfield women's soccer student-athlete Madison Reinert has loved soccer since before she can remember and has always found success playing the game.

"She has been playing since she was 3," Madison's father Steve Reinert says. "She was one of those kids that would score three or more goals and move back to defense to give the other kids a chance."

After a standout career at Oley Valley High School, Madison joined the Mountaineers during the Fall of 2019, as one of the program's top recruits. However, Reinert's freshman year was plagued with challenges when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Mountaineers to cancel the entire 2020 season.

Forced to train alone and away from her teammates, Madison turned her love for soccer into a full-time job, hitting the gym and turf every moment she was able.

"I was going hard at the gym and on the turf every single day," Madison says. "Even between work, it was a full 24-hour day. I was really hyped for the new season."

As regulations surrounding the pandemic began to fade, Madison and the Mounties had their sights set on the 2021 preseason camp, where they could finally train together as a team again.

With only a few days before move-in day, Madison's life would change forever. As day turned to night on August 7, 2021 Madison hopped in the shower after returning home from a gym workout. What seemed to be a normal summer evening turned into a nightmare. Madison began to lose feeling in her arm and could no longer keep her balance. Her parents comforted her before rushing her to the hospital. Madison had suffered a stroke.

"It was difficult," Steve says. "We didn't know where we were going–what the outcome would be. That first day it was one in the morning when we got to the hospital. The next morning the doctor told us she would have to learn how to walk and talk again."

School and soccer became an afterthought; as Madison was now fighting for her life.

"I just remember the world standing still," Head Coach John Shaffer says. "As a coach you don't want anything to happen to your people; and as a coach, to hear a physically and mentally healthy young women has a stroke, it really stops the world."

After a day in the hospital, things got worse for Madison, who was now dealing with seizures on top of the life-threatening stroke.

"Right as everything was happening, I immediately began questioning if I would ever be able to play soccer again," Madison shares. "I don't remember a lot of the time in the hospital because I was in and out of consciousness. But there were times I really thought I was going to die. During the first few days I came to terms with dying, I know it sounds bad, but I believed if the higher power wanted me to keep living, he would do that for me. Soccer became a second thought. It was all about surviving."

Back on campus at Mansfield, the mood shifted from excitement for preseason, to concern for a teammate in danger.

*Madison walks the hospital halls during her recovery.*

"I did a lot of self-healing the past few years. I have been on a self-discovery journey... I am just so grateful to have my limbs working and the ability to run and enjoy life."

– MADISON REINERT

PHOTO: **JAIME NORTH**

*Madison with the USA CP Women's ENT*

"After two years of not being able to play, move-in had a somber mood," Shaffer says. "We were eager to play and start preseason. But hanging over top of us is the fact that one of our sisters is in the hospital, and we don't know if she will be able to walk or talk again."

The process was very challenging for Madison, but with each day, recovery continued.

By Wednesday of the following week, Madison was able to lift her arm. The little things became so important. A few steps around her room turned into a walk around the hall, which turned into a walk around the hospital.

"I kept telling the doctors I wanted to keep going," Madison says "It all happened really fast."

The Mountaineers made it known that Madison was on their mind and dedicated the 2021 season to her.

"Madison spiritually led us," Shaffer shares. "We fed off her improvement, and she truly guided us."

A feeling of hope began to fill the Mountain, and part way through the season, the first sign of magic happened when Madison became healthy enough to see the team for the first time since the incident.

> "We were eager to play and start preseason. But hanging over top of us is the fact that one of our sisters is in the hospital, and we don't know if she will be able to walk or talk again."
>
> – JOHN SHAFFER, HEAD COACH

"Madison got out of the car and came walking through the fence of Van Norman field and the girls lost it," says Shaffer of Madison's return to campus.

"We immediately stopped what we were doing, and everyone ran over to her in celebration. Moments like that are what this is all about."

Her recovery began to improve to the point where she could start training again. Once again, soccer became her motivation—her everything.

Madison returned to classes during the Spring of 2021. She thanks her professors and advisors for being so supportive during this time. Returning to full participation in her courses meant Madison remained on track to graduate and could refocus on her dreams.

Although Madison had to take everything one step at a time, the determination and grit she showed in the hospital while fighting for her life translated into her eventual return to the soccer pitch. Those few steps that started around her hospital transformed into a sprint on the turf.

"In the back of my head I knew she was going to be fine because she is one of the strongest people I know," Smith says. "If anyone could beat this, it was her."

Madison officially received the clear to return to the pitch during the summer. The first day of the 2022 preseason marked one year since her stroke.

"That was super emotional for me, seeing everything come full circle," Madison says. "We did our fitness test, and I did better than I expected, and it was very emotional. Everyone came up to me and told me I was doing amazing—it was an incredible moment."

Madison's teammates noticed right away that their friend did not want anyone to treat her differently. As the preseason continued, Madison never missed a beat, jumping into training full speed and getting her body where it needed to be.

Then, the unbelievable happened.

August 28, 2022, the first game of the season against Salem University, Shaffer called for a sub—Madison Reinert.

"The nerves took over, but when he called me in, I was so excited," Madison says. "It had been so long since I got to touch a ball and get to battle against people that were not my teammates."

All the training and rehabilitation paid off just minutes into her first live action in over two years. In the 65th minute, right out of a story book, Madison delivered.

In her first game back after missing a full season during the pandemic and missing another year recovering from a stroke, Madison found the back of the net for the first time in her collegiate career.

"The whole thing is very emotional for us," Steve adds. "I don't even know how to explain it. Not only is this coming back after a stroke, but it is also her first collegiate game ever. I watched the replay 100 times. It brought a grown man to tears."

Madison embraces the journey she has been on and still takes her recovery day-to-day. "I did a lot of self-healing the past few years. I have been on a self-discovery journey. I read and meditate every day. I am just so grateful to have my limbs working and the ability to run and enjoy life."

She continues to be an inspiration to her teammates and many others.

"Madison earned everything," Shaffer says. "She had an amazing preseason, and she was ready to compete for time. I just told her to go in there and get after it."

Madison's perseverance has continued to lead her to new opportunities, as she was approached by the United States Women's National Paralympic Soccer Team (now known as the USA CP Women's ENT) in March and was given an invitation to attend training camp. She trained and tested at the Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista California for the opportunity to make the United States of America Women's National Paralympic Soccer Team.

Madison, who appeared in 16 games and made one start in 2022, has her entire future in front of her.

She continues to be an inspiration to her teammates and many others and is a testament to the strength of the Mountie spirit.

*Madison during her hospital stay.*

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# IN IT FOR THE *Long Run*

BY: **TOM McGUIRE**

Running. You either like it or hate it. Ryan Clifford '19 doesn't just like to run… he LOVES it and loves it so much he has taken to ultra-level running, covering distances most people wouldn't want to drive.

So how does someone go from 'liking' running to 'loving' it? It's a journey.

Growing up on Long Island as a triplet, Clifford's first recollection of running was as a 7-year-old when he ran a seven-minute mile in a competition. He was hooked.

"I didn't have the speed needed to compete in the glamour events like the 400- or 800-meter races, but had the endurance for the longer races," says Clifford. "So I started running 3K's (1.8 miles) and then 5K's (3.1 miles)."

Clifford's running prowess in high school soon attracted the attention of college coaches, including Mike Rohl of Mansfield.

"Everywhere we went it was the 'Clifford brothers.' We did all the same things," says Clifford. "But for college, we wanted to do our own thing. So, my brother Tom ended up at UConn and my other brother Kevin at Oswego State in New York."

"I was looking for a school where I could stand out, have a great team atmosphere, and be involved in campus life," Clifford says. "I got that at Mansfield."

Clifford was not only a standout for the Mounties in cross country and track, he also was a resident assistant for three years. "Coach wasn't thrilled with that idea, but saw I could handle the workload," he recalls.

And handle it he did. As a senior in cross country he qualified for the NCAA Division II championships; while in track he put together the most demanding performance schedule possible for a distance runner. At the 2019 PSAC championships at Mansfield, he ran the 10,000 meters, the 3,000-meter steeplechase, and the 5,000 meters race, all in less than 48 hours, winning the steeplechase and earning top three finishes in the other two events.

That demanding schedule, which includes running at least a mile every day since August of 2017, fueled his desire to run longer distance races.

"Three weeks after graduation, I ran a 50-mile race finishing fourth overall. I was hooked," he says.

A desire to earn a master's degree led Clifford to Minot (ND) State where he coached cross country, indoor and outdoor track, along with earning master's in both sport management and business management. "Coaching was something I really enjoyed, although North Dakota is flat and cold. It added to the challenge to stay consistent with my running," he says.

When COVID hit, Clifford put that newfound passion to good use, running from one end of Long Island to the other in 24 hours. He did this and raised over $15,000 for John Theissen's Children Foundation, a local charity that provides funding for sick and underprivileged children within Nassau County.

"I started at midnight. It was neat to know that I had run two marathons by the time most people were waking up at 8 a.m.," says Clifford. "On the final eight miles into Brooklyn and toward the finish line, my dad ran with me, which was cool since he worked in the borough throughout his career."

Clifford's passion for running longer distance events, has given him the opportunity to see a lot of the country.

"My racing schedule has taken me to South Dakota, Washington State, North Dakota, Arizona, all across New York State, and more," Clifford says. "I've run, over four days in a row in the Adirondacks to become a 46-R, which covers 166 miles, 60,000 feet of vertical ascent and descent, and the 46 peaks of the mountain range, which are all above 4,000 feet."

> "I was looking for a school where I could stand out, have a great team atmosphere, and be involved in campus life. I got that at Mansfield."
>
> – RYAN CLIFFORD '19

His longest race distance covered in one day is 100 miles, which he has done several times. In August of 2022 he won the Eastern States 100-miler in 20 hours, 13 minutes and 27 seconds.

A typical training week for Clifford means running between 100 and 120 miles per week, much like he did in college. That amount of training means Clifford will go through between 10-12 pairs of shoes per year.

And how does someone running that distance stay hydrated and fueled enough to have the energy to go that far? "My business partner Cody Oher, who is my crew chief for most of my ultras, and I have figured out the best nutritional plan depending on where we are racing," he says. "Warm weather means less solid food, while cooler weather we can mix in dried fruits along with a pasty, gel-like food called G.U. It's not the best tasting thing, but gets the job done."

So, what does someone who runs so much do in his 'spare' time? How about opening an escape room. "Cody and I are working to open RYCO's Escape Room, with four rooms, in the Samanea Mall in Westbury, New York," says Clifford. "Trying to navigate all the regulations and paperwork to get this off the ground has been challenging. Hopefully, we'll be open in a few months."

"I really cherished my time spent in Mansfield," adds Clifford. "I miss the campus, the team, and the running trails. It was a great four years and really made me who I am today."

So, the next time you get ready to go on a road trip in your car, remember that Ryan Clifford could run the same distance.

# A CALLING FOR SCIENCE

BY: **ELIZABETH ARNOLD**

Lauren Griffith arrived as a student at Mansfield University never having seen the campus. She transferred on the recommendation of a friend with the intention of playing basketball. Since coming to campus, Griffith has not only found a home, but has thrived. Her accomplishments rival those of her peers at Tier I institutions. If you ask Griffith, she'll tell you she's simply chosen to make the most of the opportunities in front of her. "A university like Mansfield leaves a lot of room to create opportunities. I've found the room to be creative and go outside my comfort zone," she says.

In 2022, Griffith, a 2023 cell and molecular biology graduate, received the prestigious NASA Pennsylvania Space Grant, and plans to use the funds to continue her research on pancreatic cancer. She also secured an internship with Cornell University and the National Institute of Health (NIH) which, according to Griffith, served as an important gateway for new research opportunities.

With Mansfield faculty member Dr. Kristen Long, associate professor of biology, as a mentor, Griffith's research focuses on exploring how curcumin, an experimental treatment for solid tumors, impacts the inflammatory bacteria that are present in the gut. "Using mice as a model, we collected feces, cultured bacteria from the feces, and then treated the bacteria with different concentrations of the curcumin treatment," explains Griffith. "In the spring, we used a different systems-level approach, where we fed the mice curcumin over a specific time span. We then analyzed the sequences of the different bacteria to determine shifts in bacterial populations."

Beyond her own research on how curcumin treatment impacts gut bacteria and tumor growth, Griffith spent the summer at the University of Maryland in the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases STEP-UP program helping with research concerning how various technologies and software can be used to explore disease therapies. Griffith studied how they affect triple negative breast cancer metastasis therapies.

"I was able to conduct independent research firsthand, which outside of my research at Mansfield, was the first time I have done so," Griffith says.

"I learned so much during my internship," shares Griffith. "I learned about the graduate school experience and the different avenues of research that I could take with my major in cell and molecular biology, what independent research looks like at the graduate school level, how to prepare for a scientific presentation, and the importance of networking in the scientific field. For my own research, I learned more about the bioengineering field and how similar it is to my own field."

Griffith was drawn to cancer research after seeing family and community members impacted by the disease. For her, it's a way to give back. Giving back isn't just something Griffith focuses on in the lab. She's passionate about paving the way for more women and girls to pursue an education in STEM. "Where I grew up, I didn't have examples of women doing what I'm doing. I didn't know that becoming a scientist or earning a Ph.D. was even possible," she says.

Through the power of social media, Griffith is sharing her story and allowing others to follow along in her everyday life in the lab, the classroom, and as she applies to Ph.D. programs in molecular biology and immunology. She says, "I want to show that scientists aren't just in the lab, there's a balance to what we do, and through my YouTube and TikTok, I'm trying to show people that."

With a minor in graphic design, Griffith says that embracing her creativity improves the work she does in the lab. She believes, "Being creative allows me to visualize things in a different way. Science, especially molecular biology, is very visual. Creativity allows you to explore different approaches and helps with visualizing steps as well as processes. Having that creative side helps with exploring new ideas."

After completing multiple prestigious internships and making her mark at Mansfield, Griffith encourages future students to find avenues for involvement on campus—to get out and meet people and professors. This kind of interaction, in her view, is what leads to life-changing opportunities.

"It's amazing the possibilities that are out there if you're active and talk to people," she says. "Being active on campus opened a lot of doors for me. And I know that's true for anyone who wants to leave their mark and shine."





Mansfield University Announces

## 2022 ALUMNI ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

**Joe Bell '15** and **Yuseff Carr '11** *(men's basketball),* **Leonard Givens '65** *(football and baseball),* **Michael Gray '10** *(track and field)* and **Taryn Schawille '14** (field hockey) were inducted into the Mansfield University Alumni Athletic Hall of Fame as the Class of 2022 at the 40th celebration on Thursday, Oct. 6, in Decker Gymnasium.

### Joe **Bell '15**

*Men's Basketball (2011-15)*

After taking a redshirt year during his first year on campus, Bell went on to have the best scoring career in Mountaineer history. Bell holds the record for career-points (1,904) and career field goals made (732), while his 547 points in 2013-14 sit second behind Louis Judson for points in a season. His 371 career free throws are third all-time, while his 134 makes at the line in 2013-14 sit sixth all-time. After graduating from Mansfield, Bell signed a professional contract with CAM Enrique Soler of the Spanish Professional Basketball League.

All-PSAC East 1st-Team and his third MU Winter Athlete of the Year. The Pottsville, Pa. native led the team in three-point percentage shooting 40% from behind the arc and was second on the team in rebounding and assists per game. Bell ranked sixth in the PSAC in scoring averaging 16.5 points per game in conference play.

As a junior, Bell finished second in the PSAC in scoring and 15th overall in the nation with 21.8 points per game. The forward set a new career high of 41 points, while scoring in double digits every game except two, on his way to his second All-PSAC East 1st-Team and first 2nd-Team NABC All-District and 2nd-Team Daktronics All-Atlantic Region.

## MOUNTIE FEVER:

### ALUMNI RETURN TO MANSFIELD ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the Mountaineers had 13 alumni return to the Athletic Department as either a coach or member of the support staff. The professionals range from eight different academic degrees and seven different athletic programs.

**Bill Brasington**
*Interim Track & Field Head Coach/*
*Assistant Cross Country Coach*
**Bachelor of Science,**
**Business Administration, 1981**

Brittany Hansrote

**Jason Chimics**
*Assistant Sprint Football Coach*
**Bachelor of Science, Criminal Justice**

**Don Cook**
*Assistant Track & Field Coach*
**Bachelor of Science, Business Administration, 2023**

**Joey Delgardo**
*Assistant Sprint Football Coach*
**Bachelor of Science, Sport Nutrition, 2022**

**John Davis**
*Assistant Women's Basketball Coach*
**Bachelor of Science, Physics, 1996/**
**Master of Education, 2010**

**Brittany Hansrote**
*Field Hockey Head Coach*
**Bachelor of Science,**
**Business Administration, 2009**

Mike Rell

**Laura Lawson**
*Assistant Field Hockey Coach*
**Bachelor of Science in Biology, 2017**

**Owen Lukens**
*Director of Athletic Communications & Marketing,*
**Bachelor of Science, Communication, 2018**

**Evan McAndrew**
*Assistant Baseball Coach*
**Bachelor of Science, Business Administration, 2020**

**Mike Rell**
*Assistant Men's Basketball Coach*
**Bachelor of Science, Communication, 2020**

**Cole Shomper**
*Assistant Baseball Coach*
**Bachelor of Science, Criminal Justice, 2022**

Bryce Zaparzynski

**John Szentesy**
*Men's Basketball Head Coach*
**Bachelor of Arts, Liberal Studies, 1998/**
**Master of Elementary Education, 2012**

**Bryce Zaparzynski**
*Assistant Athletic Trainer*
**Bachelor of Science, Biology, 2020**



Bell became the fourth player in school history to be named PSAC East Freshman of the Year after earning a conference record eight Freshman of the Week honors throughout the season. Following the season, Bell was also named 2nd team All-PSAC East honors, while earning his first of three MU Winter Athlete of the Year.

Bell continued that trend in year two, earning his first 1st-Team All-PSAC honor and his second straight MU Athlete of the Year. Twice named PSAC East Player of the Week. Bell started all 28 games as a sophomore and led the team and ranked seventh in the PSAC in scoring at 17.4 points a game. The sophomore dominated in a win over Clarion, finishing with 34 points and 22 rebounds, which was the second highest total in NCAA Division II this season.

## Yuseff **Carr '11**

*Men's Basketball (2007-11)*

Carr led the Mounties on their most dominant run of the decade, reaching the PSAC playoffs in three of his four seasons, while winning the PSAC East twice and reaching the NCAA tournament during his senior season in 2010-11. Nine years removed from his last game as a Mountie, Carr's name is still scattered throughout the program's record book. Carr's 1,497 career points is good for sixth all-time. He is the record holder for career free throws (610) and is second in games played (109) and career blocks (125), while his 46 blocks in 2010-11 rank fifth. Carr is second in career free throws (394), while his 129 free throws in 2010-11 rank eighth.

Carr was one of the most dominating players in Mansfield's 120-year men's basketball history. He led Mansfield to back-to-back PSAC East titles during the 2010 and 2011 seasons, as well as their last NCAA National Tournament appearance in 2011. A three-time All-PSAC East selection, Carr was a two-time NCAA Division II Atlantic Region selection. In 2011 he became the first Mountaineer to be selected to participate in the Reese's Division II All-Star game at the NCAA Division II National Championship Weekend recognizing him as one of the top 20 NCAA Division II Basketball players in the country.

Following his senior season, Carr was selected to participate in the 2011 Reese's NCAA Division II College All-Star game as one of just 20 players from across the country, representing the top NCAA Division II players in the nation, while becoming the first person to do so in Mansfield history.

A bruising forward in the low post, Carr earned 1st Team All-PSAC East selection for the second straight season and was the second Mountaineer to be named PSAC East Player of the Year since Louis Judson first won the award in 1997. He was the second player in school history to earn NABC all-Atlantic Region honors in back-to-back season, including first team honors this year. He moved into fifth all-time in Mountaineer scoring with 1,497 career points, while earning his second consecutive MU Winter Athlete of the Year.

As a junior, Carr again ranked in the top-10 in the conference in points, rebounds, blocks, and free throws made, while moving into 18th all-time in program history with points as he eclipsed the 1,000-point milestone. Carr was named MU Winter Male Athlete of the Year after earning NABC Division II Atlantic All-Region Team, 1st-Team All-PSAC East.

## Leonard **Givens '65**

*Football, Baseball (1961-64)*

Givens, a native of Elmira, N.Y., was the first great African American Mountaineer football player, earning a position on the starting offensive line from 1961-64. During his senior season, Givens was the only Mountaineer, and Mansfield's first black football player, to earn All-PSAC honors in an era when the All-PSAC team was selected from all the teams in the conference, not just on a divisional format.

A 205-pound senior, Givens was the leader on the offense and defensive lines who was a key component of the success Mansfield State College achieved in '64 that led them to a 3rd-place finish in the highly talented State Conference.

Givens played for head coach Ed Stelmack in 1961, where he helped lead the Mounties to a 4-4 record before finishing his career under the leadership of Bob Moore, where the Mountaineers achieved a .500 record in two of his final three seasons.

Givens was also a standout on the baseball field all four years he attended Mansfield starting as a catcher, outfielder, and pitcher.

After graduating, Givens went on to earn his law degree from Howard University in 1971 and enjoyed an exceptional career as a lawyer in Detroit specializing in labor law. He continues to be highly respected and recognized as a jurist, as well as for his continued civic contributions.

## Michael **Gray '10**

*Track and Field (2006-10)*

Gray earned All-American status after placing sixth in the discus at the NCAA Outdoor Championships in the spring of 2008. He qualified for the national championships by winning the PSAC discus competition on his way to being named 2008 PSAC Male Outdoor Field Athlete of the Year.

During the 2009 outdoor season, Gray reclaimed his discus title at the PSAC Championships while placing seventh in the hammer throw. His championship performance garnered him PSAC Championship Field Athlete of the Year honors. Gray went on to place 11th in the discus at the NCAA Outdoor Championships that same season.

Gray threw his way to a PSAC shot put title and a third-place finish in the weight throw at the conference indoor championships during the 2008-09 season.

He holds the school records in discus, indoor and outdoor shot put and hammer throw, and weight throw.

Gray is a three-time MU Athlete of the Year and is one of just six athletes in Mansfield history to earn three or more Athlete of the Year awards.

He was also a member of the men's basketball program during the 2007-08 season.

## Taryn **Schawille '14**

*Field Hockey (2010-13)*

Schawille, who was a member of the All-PSAC field hockey team every year of her time as a Mountaineer, wrapped up an illustrious career as the program's all-time leader in points (120) and goals (56). She is in the top ten for goals in a season with 15 (seventh) and points in a season with 32 (sixth).

Following her final season, Schawille was named 2nd Team All-PSAC, securing her fourth consecutive selection to the all-conference squad. However, she also earned her first All-American nod, after being selected to 2nd-Team Synapse Sports. The forward again led the team and ranked eighth in the PSAC in goals scored with 13 as she moved into first for all-time for program goals (56) and points (120).

As a junior, the forward earned her first 1st-Team All-PSAC honor, while continuing excellence in the classroom, earning her third straight NFHCA Division II National Academic Squad honors, Division II ADA Academic Achievement Award, and was the recipient of the Outstanding Business Award. She led the team and ranked fourth in the PSAC in goals scored with 15, while moving into a tie with Gretchen Reschke (1999-02) for most career goals in school history at 43. She also led the team and ranked eighth in the conference in points with 32 and third in total shots with 86.

She earned 2nd team All-PSAC West selection during each of her first two seasons, where she led the team in points and goals. In 2011, Schawille ranked 5th in the PSAC and 11th in the nation in goals per game with 0.83.

In 2020, Schawille was named to the MU Athletics' Field Hockey All-Decade Team.

# ALUMNI
## SPOTLIGHT

### Josh **Grassi ’18**
*Biology and Fisheries*

Recent Mansfield graduate Josh Grassi ’18 has published findings of his senior research project in the peer-reviewed journal *Environmental DNA*, along with co-authors Dr. Gregory Moyer, associate professor of biology at Mansfield; Chris Rees and Dr. Meredith Bartron, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Dr. Heather Galbraith, U.S. Geological Survey.

Grassi developed a molecular technique to detect the American Eel under water. This technique termed “environmental DNA,” or simply eDNA, can detect the presence of an organism, sight unseen, simply by taking a water sample.

### Dr. Emily **Edwards ’17**
*Chemistry*

At Mansfield, Edwards was heavily involved in the campus community, including serving as a supplemental instructor, working with the Honors Program, and conducting work and research in the chemistry department. Edwards completed her Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Rochester, where she was recognized with multiple teaching and research fellowships.

Now, Edwards works as a scientific editor for the open access journal, *Cell Reports Physical Science* and her Mansfield education was essential in her professional journey there.

As a strong advocate of a liberal arts education, she ties her current success to the excellent critical thinking, reading comprehension, and analytical problem-solving skills developed at Mansfield. Additionally, without excellent mentorship and science education in the Chemistry Department, she never would have considered completing a doctorate.

The hands-on research experience at Mansfield has been critical for many alumni who have moved on to industrial, research, and academic roles. Soon, you can check out the *Cell Reports Physical Science* website for a piece Edwards organized to recognize the value of research at Primarily Undergraduate Institutions, featuring Dr. Elaine Farkas of Mansfield’s Chemistry and Physics Department.

### Kristina **Petersen ’00**
*Broadcasting and Communication*

Kristina Petersen ’00 currently oversees the communications strategy for all Penn State athletics, including head football coach James Franklin.

As associate athletics director for strategic communications, Petersen is currently in her 17th year with the Penn State Nittany Lions, including five as the primary communications director for Penn State Football. A former softball student-athlete at Mansfield, Petersen is also Penn State’s sport administrator for the softball program and secondary sport administrator for the men’s and women’s gymnastics programs.

### Sandra **Weaver ’85**
*Secondary Education*

Sandra Weaver ’85 was named the 2022 Youth Protection Champion. This was the first award of its kind given by the Higher Education Protection Network; a national association that seeks to advance the interactions of higher education institutions with children and youth. The organization serves as a coordinated voice to promote good practices for protecting children in higher education.

The Youth Protection Champion winner demonstrates exemplary service of the Higher Educational Protection Network (HEPNet) above and beyond the typical involvement of a HEPNet member. Weaver is the director of youth program compliance at Penn State University. In this role, she is responsible for coordinating compliance with the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law and university youth protection policies that impact employees, volunteers, and minors who participate in a variety of Penn State University youth programs across the Commonwealth.

Weaver speaks locally, regionally, and nationally on the topic of youth protection in the higher education environment and has authored articles for numerous publications.

## 1970s

**Rev. James R. Ritter, Jr. '78** has retired after more than 40 years of pastoral ministry. He resides in Watsontown with his wife, Mary. They have three daughters and three grandchildren.

## 1990s

**Christopher T. Griffiths '93** retired from the US Army and the Pennsylvania Army National Guard after 31 years of service.

## 2000s

**Joshua Dent '00** wrote a book called *With Hope & Help*. Best-selling author Stella Wilkinson says, "A thought-provoking and superb read. You will laugh and probably cry too. Suitable for ages 8-80, as it deals with some profound issues and events, but all told through the eyes of a child. After reading this, I wanted to go out and do some good!"

**Seth J. Kelly '00**, a member of the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), was promoted to captain and assigned as executive officer to the Commissioner of the PSP. During his career, Capt. Kelly was selected as 2018 Trooper of the Year and was awarded the department's Medal of Honor and Purple Heart.

**Cody Bowen '05** was promoted to SVP/Talent Acquisition and Development Manager by C&N Bank. As talent acquisition and development manager, Bowen will develop and execute recruitment and sourcing strategies to attract top-tier candidates who align with the C&N culture. He has also served as a volunteer with Wellsboro Little League for 15 years. In his personal life, Bowen enjoys outdoor activities and spending time with his family, including his wife Ashley and their children Maddie, Caden, and Savvy.

## In Memoriam

William Anderson '68
Allison Armentrout '05
Emerrene (Siglin) Bailey '51
Thomas Best '53
George Bodine '75
Debbie (Haag) Bowen '96
Emeritus Stephen Brown
James Buxton '67
Patrick Clancy '63
Glenda (Colton) Clark '67
Diane (Kirby) Connor '54
Esther (Purvis) Cook '53
Kim (Souder) Drake '75
Dorothy (Swayne) Earl '56
Gary Edgreen '69
William Edwards '84
Stuart Elick '96
David Evans '72
Debra (Bogaczyk) Everett '80
Daniel Fabricius '79
Michael Fairlie '73
Charles Fritz '84
Ellen (Houser) Good '50
Nancy (Johnson) Hetrick '66
Deesonya Hughes '04
Carol (Bodine) Johnson '76
Allen Keller '68
Jill Kemp '88
Edward Kimmel '65
Ronald Longbothum '62
Louise (Griffin) Marsh '54
Marilyn Melhuish '56
Walter McKendrick '54
Esther (Hess) Miller '42
Patricia (Feig) Osani '54
John Severs '69
David Shakespeare '76
Barry Shea '89
Gertrude Schnell '55
Delores (Paris) Smith '71
William Stettler '68
Wendy (Stewart) Swartley '70
John VanSciver '63
Susan Welfling '74
James West '68
Edward White '59
William Wichert '57
James Willow '72
James Wilson '57
Christine (Hill) Woodward '97

**Have a class note to share?** We'd love to hear from you. Visit **www.mansfield.edu/alumni**

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**JULY**

**8** **Zegalia Golf Outing**
Corey Creek Golf Course

**Billtown Bash**
Alumni Reunion

**SEPTEMBER**

**TBD** **SpringGate Winery Alumni Event**
(TBD)

**OCTOBER**

**20** **Homecoming Weekend**
October 20–22

**Annual Alumni Golf Tournament**
Corey Creek Golf Course

View a full list of upcoming events at
**www.mansfield.edu/alumni/events**

# A HISTORY OF MUSIC: William George Butler's Mansfield Legacy

Music has been a tradition on Mansfield's campus since the days of the Mansfield Seminary in 1857. By 1871, the campus hosted a state normal music academy. The name "Music Department" was adopted in 1914, the same year Mansfield State Normal School hired the man for whom Butler Music Center is named—William George Butler—an accomplished musician and composer.

Butler received his early education at Blossburg schools before entering Mansfield State Normal School. He graduated from the teacher's course in 1897 and the social and music courses in 1898. He went on to earn his doctorate from the State University of New York. Butler was a great musician, but particularly excelled at the violin.

Butler chose to head north in 1914, the same time Mansfield State Normal School hired William Straughn as principal. During the war years, Straughn was instrumental in organizing military-style training. Butler served as band conductor for that unit. It was not long before Dr. Butler formed Mansfield's first orchestra.

Dr. Butler's efforts were focused on upgrading music education at Mansfield. In 1920, Mansfield, along with Indiana and West Chester, was chosen by the state to serve as a primary school to train music supervisors. Three years later, Mansfield was accredited to train music teachers. Four years later, Mansfield became a state teacher's college.

While teaching, Butler remained a very prolific composer. One of his more important works was "Long Live America," which was one of the official anthems of the George Washington Bicentennial in 1932. President Herbert Hoover personally congratulated Dr. Butler on the performance. Dr. Butler also composed a state hymn, "Old Pennsylvania of Mine," which was widely performed. He composed the alma mater for Mansfield and his words and music, first written in 1917, are still celebrated today whenever "Mansfield, Hail" is sung.

Butler retired from teaching in 1938. He never married and became ill in late 1954. Though he passed away at the former Blossburg State Hospital in 1955, his legacy lives on.

In 1960 the institution became Mansfield State College and diversified its academic offerings. The Music Department followed suit and began offering programs in performance, music merchandising, and music therapy as well as music education. By 1965, Mansfield offered a Bachelor of Arts in Music and also offered music as a minor.

At that time, music was taught in the building now called Elliot Hall (then called the Arts Building) and had to share space with the popular Home Economics Department. Every available space was used and students routinely had to practice in closets, bathrooms, and in nearby homes.

While Straughn Hall, located right next door, was a convenient venue for performances, the need for a separate building to house the Music Department was clearly evident.

In 1969 Mansfield State College opened the new music and world cultures building and promptly named it in honor of Dr. Butler. It features 55 practice rooms, as well as performance halls and classrooms and remains widely used by students today.

Dr. Butler was well-liked by his students. They dedicated the 1929 yearbook, The Carontawan to him. The dedication reads, "With sentiments too deep-rooted to be translated into words; with all appreciation for past service to our College; with the sincere respect of a Mansfield class to a faculty member; and with the affection of a friend to a friend, the Senior Class of 1929 dedicate this, 'Our Carontawan' to Will George Butler."

# Jonathan **Rothermel**

*Professor, Political Science*





For the past 15 years, Professor Jonathan Rothermel has taught political science at Mansfield. A first-generation college student, he is a product of the State System, having graduated from Millersville University. At Mansfield, Rothermel's commitment to building community has led to leadership roles in CU shared governance, as well as with the Mansfield Red and Black Committee. Since 2014, he has led an annual student trip to Belize focused on field research. His passion for Mansfield and for supporting students is evident in his engagement on campus and in the local community.

**1 | Tell us about your field of study. How did you develop an interest in political science, and what led you to Mansfield?**

My political science professor at Millersville University, Dr. Kirsten Bookmiller, got me interested in international relations. We were required to read the NY Times (the actual newspaper) every day, and I remember thinking it was cool that part of my homework was to keep up with the news. She is the one who first suggested that I consider graduate school. I met my wife, Sheri, in graduate school at Temple University, and she encouraged me to apply to Mansfield. The small school atmosphere, the emphasis on teaching, and the beautiful location were appealing to us. We moved here in 2008 with my 4-month-old son, Luke. Today, he is 15 and my daughter, Lena, is 12, and we love it here!

**2 | Why do you believe community building is so important at Mansfield and how do you see it growing as a result of the integration with Bloomsburg and Lock Haven?**

Community is the comparative advantage at Mansfield. Students not only walk away with a great education, but personal relationships that endure a lifetime. Community building will ultimately be the key to making integration successful. As an integrated political science program, we make an intentional effort to meet over a meal on a regular basis, and it is already paying dividends.

**3 | What is the most rewarding part of your job?**

I love my students and watching them succeed beyond Mansfield. I joke that I live vicariously through them. I also find it rewarding to work together with others for a shared goal, whether it be figuring out some of the nuts and bolts of integration or organizing a successful Red and Black luncheon. When I see students, faculty, and staff gathering and enjoying themselves, it warms my heart.

**4 | What do you see as the most exciting opportunities on the horizon at Mansfield?**

Integration is the next chapter of Mansfield's history, and I'm excited to help shape it. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues on interesting projects, extending opportunities for students from other campuses to travel to Belize, and strengthening our position as an important pillar of our local community.

**5 | How do you enjoy spending your time off campus?**

My wife and I have given in to the pickleball fad. It's so much fun! I also enjoy playing sports with my kids, meeting up with friends to play Rook (card game), hunting, walking my dogs, and traveling. I'm always up for trying new and interesting restaurants!

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